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COLOMBIAN NEWS AND VIEWS

The Official Organ of the Mennonite Brethren Mission in Colombia

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DECEMBER, 1949

Executive Secretary Visits Colombia

From May 13 to June 6 Reverend A. E. Janzen, the executive secretary of our Conference Mission Board, visited the Colombian mission field. It was the last stop in his tour of several continents, visiting the various conference mission projects.

The highlights of Reverend Janzen's visit were a tour of our field in the Choco, and the meeting with the missionary council in La Cumbre. The Lord manifested Himself at the meetings, and far-reaching decisions were formulated.

The evenings of the days during which the council met were given to devotions. Professor Janzen served with a series of inspiring messages. His visit marks a milestone in the history of our mission work in Colombia.



Names left to right are:

Rear row standing: David Wirsche, Peter Wirsche, Daniel A. Wirsche, Mrs. Wirsche, Harry K. Bartel, Mrs. Bartel, Jacob A. Loewen, Mrs. Loewen, Mrs. Dyck, John A. Dyck, and Professor Janzen.

Center row seated: Annie Dyck, Lydia Golbek, Mary Schroeder, Lillian Schafer, Ruth Loewen, and Kathryn Lentzner.

Front row standing: Gladys Loewen, Wesley Wirsche, Stanley Wirsche, Roland Dyck, and Judy Bartel.

Map of the Valle and the Choco Where the M. B. Work Is Situated

Mission Work in the Choco. The Mennonite Brethren Mission is the only foreign mission working in the Choco. The Gospel Missionary Union national church has a national couple in Quibdo. Thus, for the present the Mennonite Brethren Church is responsible only for the San Juan region in the Choco. Our stations in this area are: Istmina and Noanamá. Mission Work in the Valle. Nearly all of the major missions in Colombia are represented in the Valle. Our own station there has a two-fold purpose: (1) to preach the gospel in La Cumbre and the surroundings, (2) to provide a place with a good climate where the missionaries from the Choco may come to for rest and recuperation. The station is located at La Cumbre.

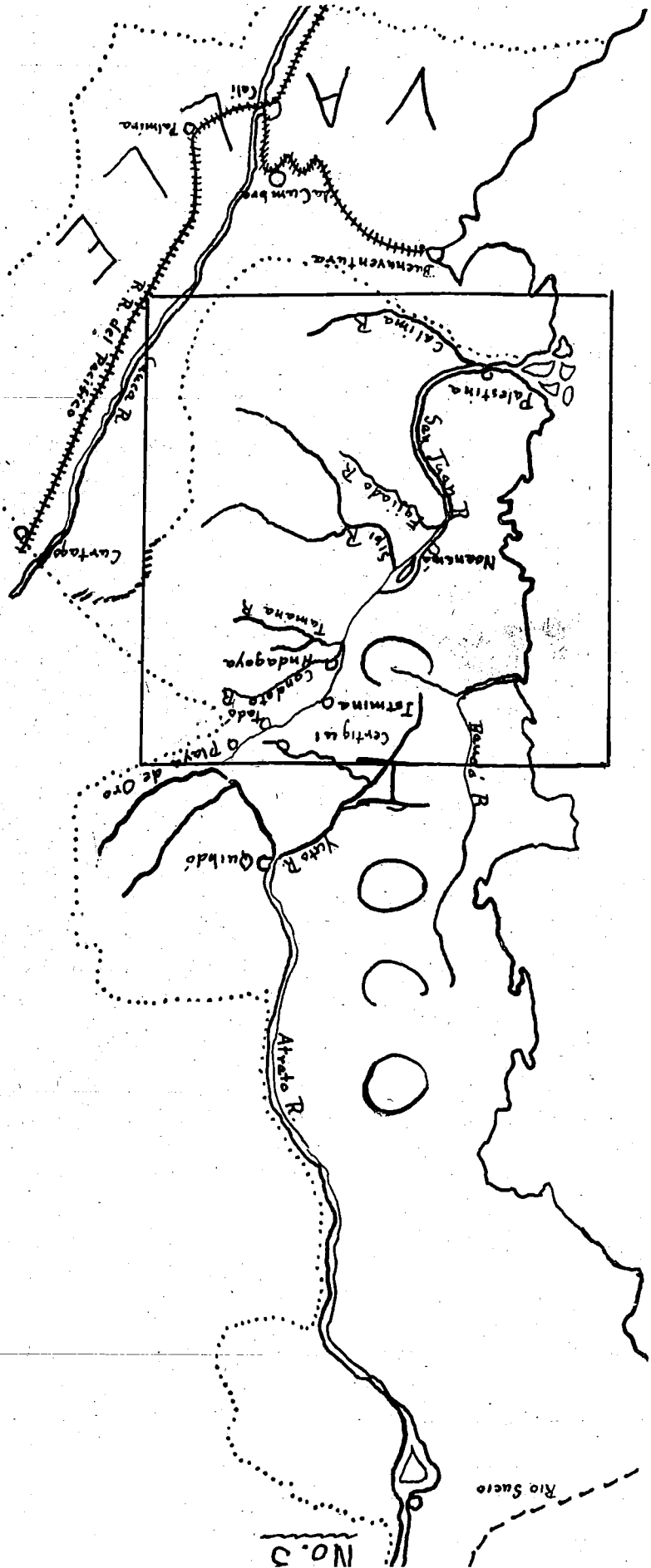
Chart of Distances.

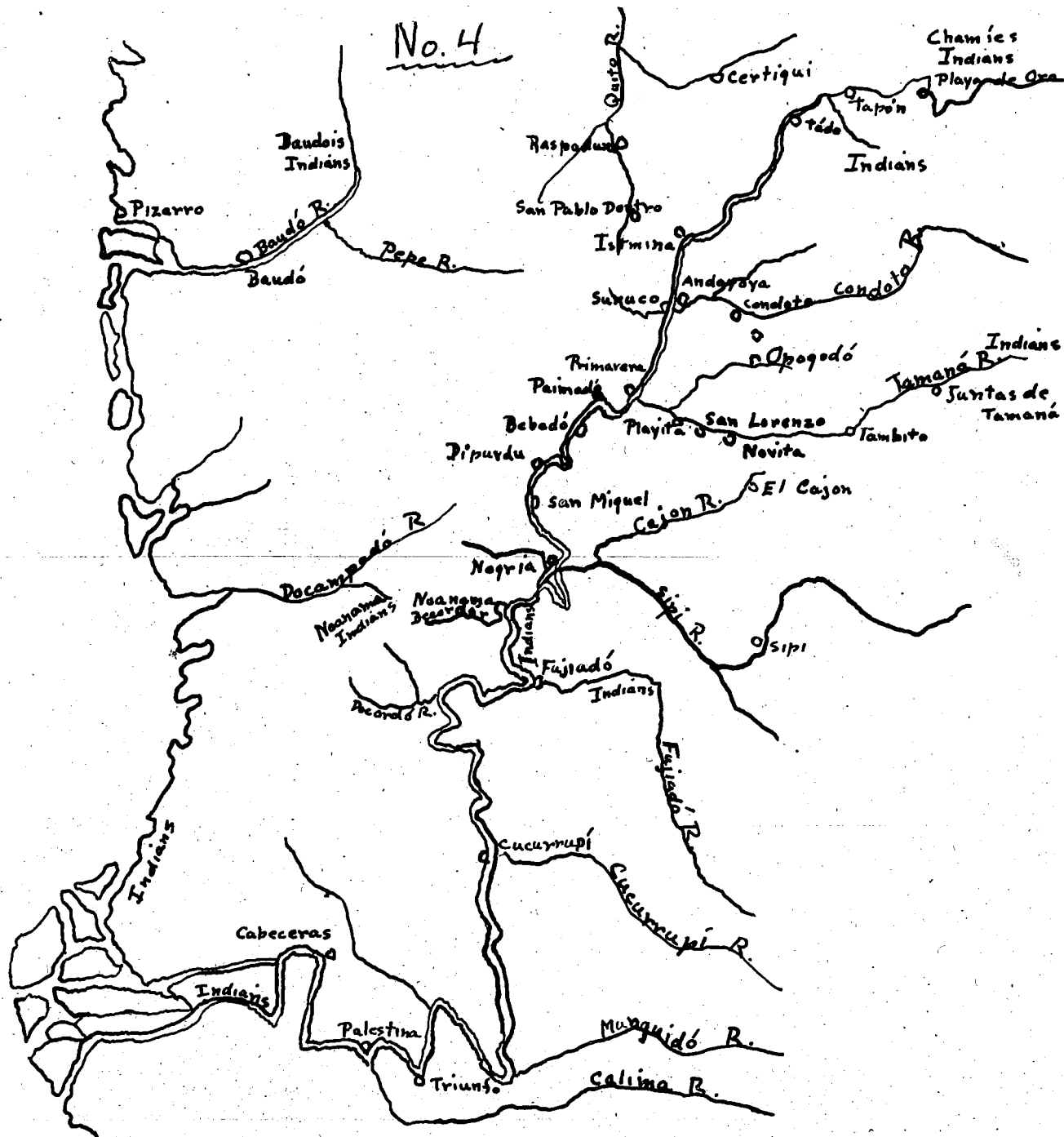
(1) By land and water from Istmina to:

Quibdo	50 miles
Andagoya	4 miles
Noanamá	51 miles
Paestina	132 miles
Mouth of San Juan	185 miles
Buenaventura	230 miles
La Cumbre	273 miles
Cali	300 miles

(2) By air from Istmina to (this does not postulate that such service exists):

Quibdo	30 miles
Buenaventura	100 miles
La Cumbre	115 miles
Cali	125 miles

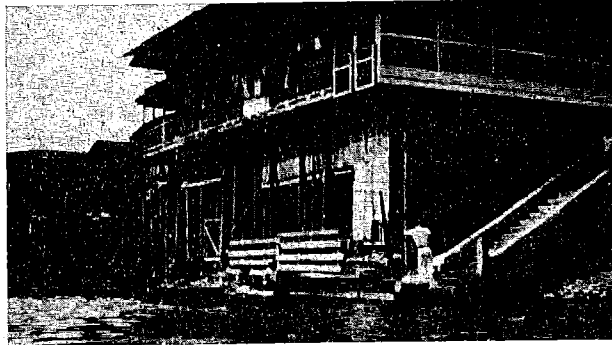




The Indians. There are varying theories as to the origin of the Indians in the San Juan. However, the best seems to indicate that all are descendants of a common stock. Larger groups are found at the various places where the word "Indians" stands on the map, yet scattered families are to be found throughout the San Juan region. There is, however, another distinct tribe on the Baudó River. This tribe is unreached by the gospel.

Extent of Work. Almost all the villages and towns shown on this map have been reached with the gospel, but in many cases it is only once or twice. However, besides these there is also a large number of smaller places many of which too, have at least had one opportunity to hear the way of salvation. Pray that the Word sown may bear fruit.

From ISTMINA



A view of the mission property at Istmina. It is situated at the junction of the San Pablo and the San Juan Rivers; and was purchased in the spring of 1948 from a Colombian lawyer for \$3000.00.

The house contains an apartment for a married couple, now occupied by the John A. Dycks, an apartment for single workers, currently occupied by Misses Kathryn Lentzner and Mary Schroeder, and a dispensary.

What an Easter Sunday

On Easter Sunday morning of this year due to heavy rains both the San Juan and the San Pablo Rivers flooded the town of Istmina. The mission property is on higher ground and therefore no water entered the house. Most of the things stored in the storeroom under the house were soaked. Several of the missionaries suffered severe losses. The water rose some thirty feet above the normal level within a few hours. These floods seem to occur every ten years. The last one took place in 1937.



Carlos Quinto Varela is one of the early believers of the Istmina congregation. An attack of infantile paralysis left his right foot and leg crippled. However, he turned out to be a bright boy and received an above the average education. For years already he has served on the municipal council of the town. However, this social position did not protect him from living in sin, nor from having to make his living by begging. He heard the gospel when our missionaries first came to Istmina and through it he has been gloriously delivered. Carlos now has a respectable job with the municipality. He also helps in the services and makes a good song leader. Put Carlos on your prayer list.

In this picture you see the two national workers who help at the Istmina station. They are Isodoro Moreno (left) and Onesimo Valencia. Both are used of the Lord to the salvation of souls.

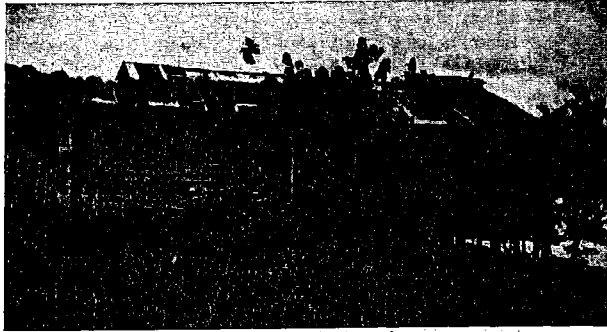


Another Launch Like This One Needed



On the left you see a picture of the motor launch for which we asked you to praise the Lord in the last issue. The launch has a twenty foot all steel hull and a twenty-two h. p. Gray Marine motor. It draws twelve inches of water. The launch holds some six passengers and their baggage, or about half a ton of cargo. With it the missionaries are now extending their ministry in a marvellous way, for they can rapidly (at least in comparison with the canoe (commute from place to place to spread the good news of salvation. It travels some fifteen miles an hour downstream and about seven and a half miles per hour upstream.

From NOANAMA



This rented house provides living quarters for the J. A. Loewen's at Noanama. The picture has already been published by the Board of Foreign Missions, however for the benefit of some friends who have not yet seen it, we publish it here.

While you will be reading this paper, the Loewens are busy building a house on the property that the Mission has acquired at Noanama. Building in the jungle is not easy nor fast. Remember them in their task.

20,000 Indians Some Years Ago

Here are some representatives of the Noanama Indian tribe of the Choco. According to historical reports they numbered 20,000 in the days of the Spanish conquest, but today there are but remnants of such a great people scattered through the length and breadth of the San Juan valley. Then too, their nomadic style of living has fostered isolation, and so today the missionaries will have to cope with several distinct dialects.

Years ago the Catholic Church made an effort to evangelize them, and the Indians did accept some Catholic customs and even buried some dead in the church cemetery; however, like their word for church implies, it remained the "priests's house" and a foreign religion. They have now reverted back to their heathen religion which is largely demon worship.

Pray for this people that soon with the multitudes of Pentecost they may say: "How hear we them speak the wonderful work of God in our own tongue."

Food for Prayer and Praise

PRAISE THE LORD:

For the land and building material acquired for Noanama station.
For the visit that Professor Janzen could pay to the field.
For the conversions among the children in the La Cumbre national school.
For the goodly number of souls that have followed the Master in baptism.

PRAY THE LORD:

That He may supply wisdom and money for building the Missionary Childrens' School at La Cumbre and the house at Noanama.
That money for a house boat may be supplied.
That entrance permits for new missionaries may be granted.
That the staff on the field may not grow weary in their labor of love.
That more souls may accept Christ as their Saviour while it is yet time of grace.

ON THE INDIAN TRAIL

Below you see David Wirsche, one of the Noanama pioneers, frying eggs over the campfire. This is great fun for a picnic, but becomes hard in the long run. However, the fact that the Indians in the San Juan live so scattered will make this type of living an imperative for the missionaries if they intend to be true to their charge to bring the gospel to this people. David has taken unto himself a helpmeet—Miss Dora Schellenberg of Blaine, Washington. May the Lord bless them.



NOTICE!

THIS ISSUE. Unfold this issue of the Colombian News and Views and you will find on the reverse side a series of maps. Post this sheet of maps on your wall and refer to it whenever you may read an article concerning our mission field in Colombia. It will help you to orient yourself.

NEXT ISSUE. Look for the next issue some time in 1950.

GREETINGS. This paper brings you the heartiest greetings from the missionaries in Colombia, as also from your editor,

Jake A. Loewen.

From LA CUMBRE



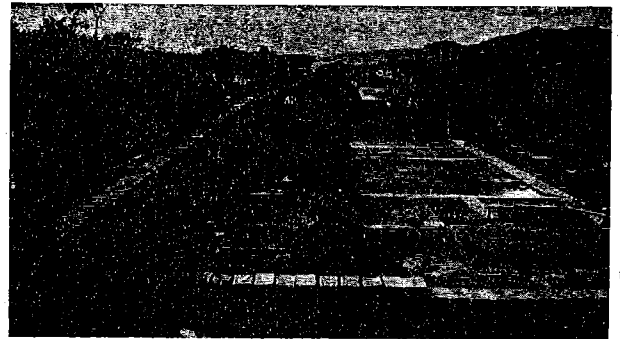
For the past two years the Missionary Children's School has been operating in rented quarters. This house is typically Colombian with small doors and hardly any windows. There are rooms without any windows at all. That such quarters are not too conducive to either good living, or hard study, is plain.

The Lord has been working and on the right you see the foundation of the new Missionary Children's School, which is to contain dormitory space, class rooms, and residence for both a teacher and house parents.

Truly, it is a great challenge to train these children in the ways of the Lord so that perchance He may call them back to serve in such a field. They would be ideal missionaries, knowing language, customs, etc. Support this worthy endeavour with your prayers and gifts.

SAVED AT SCHOOL

Yolanda Rumie who attended the La Cumbre national school during the past year. Yolanda came from a Catholic home and had for two years been an intern in a Catholic school for nuns. She came to La Cumbre because her father was at odds with the Catholic school authorities. Her first reactions in the Evangelical environment of the mission school were very negative: she threw the Bible on the floor, sat sullenly through all meetings, and was very obstinate in school. However, the Lord through His Word broke down the barriers, and by the middle of the year, on a Sunday afternoon after a Young People's meeting she asked to be saved. The change was great. Her first quest was a Bible of her own. Soon thereafter she also sent one to her father. Miss Schafer, her Sunday School teacher, reports that from a very apathetic student she changed to be one of the brightest. By the end of the school year Yolanda was one of the outstanding young singers of the congregation at La Cumbre. Pray that Yolanda may grow spiritually even in her Catholic home during the summer.



La Cumbre Believers

This picture introduces you to some of the stalwarts of the La Cumbre congregation—Jose Gomez and his wife.

Jose has some Indian blood in his veins and with it he has inherited a lot of Indian faithfulness. He heralds from one of the most Catholic departments of the country, but the Lord led him to La Cumbre to come in contact with the gospel and to be saved. Thanks to the Lord he has overcome vices and is now following his Master in baptism.

On Sundays Don Jose regularly attends the church services, where he also occasionally has led the Sunday morning prayer meeting. During the week he manages a brick factory from which the Mission is drawing the bricks for building the Missionary Children's School.

Mrs. Gomez is a believer also.



Going on Furlough

The D. A. Wirsches are leaving for North America on furlough. Besides taking some rest and doing deputation work, Brother Wirsche expects to attend Tabor College.

On the field the Wirsches have been in charge of La Cumbre station. Brother Dan has also been president of the Mission since its organization in 1946.